

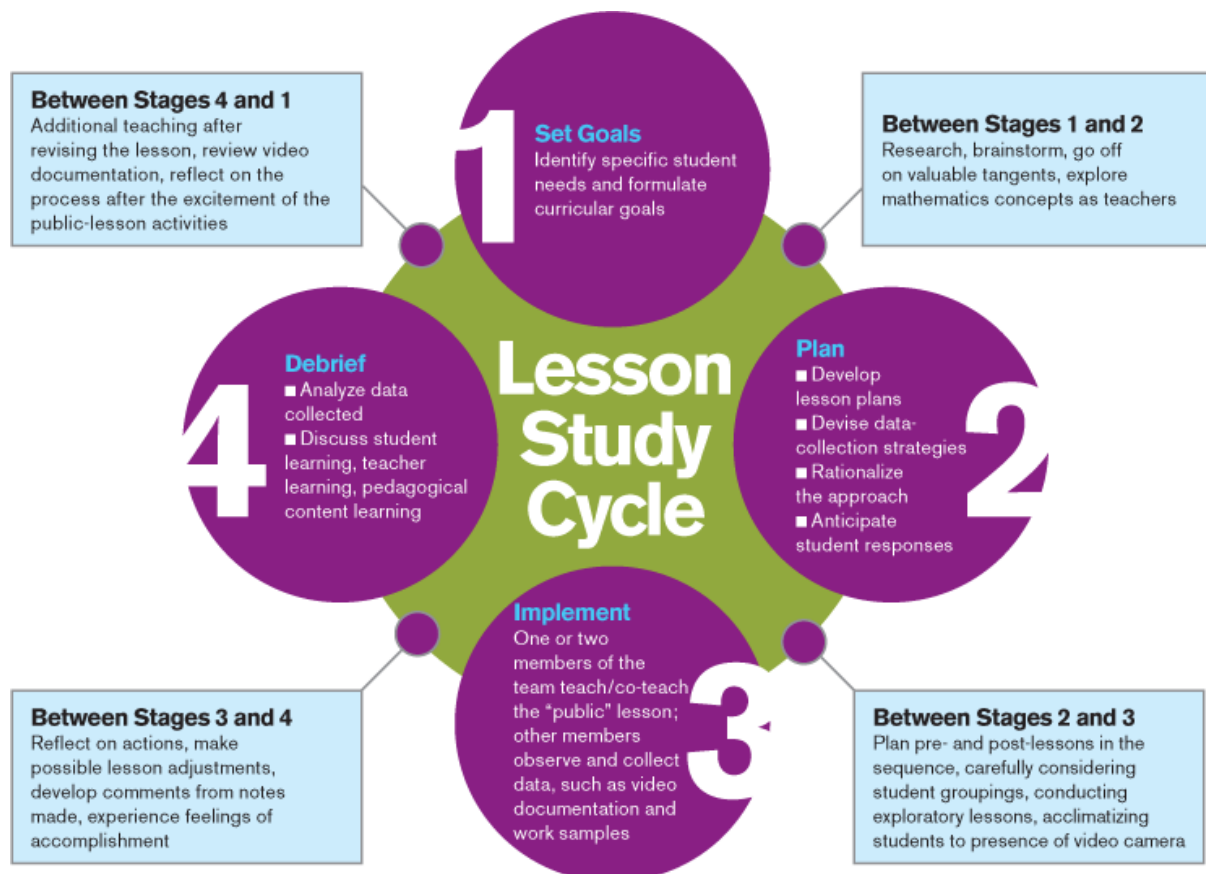
Professional Learning Community through Lesson studies in Sweden

1. Introduction to the TePinTeach Project in Sweden

There is a need to increase the practice-oriented reflective encounter between teachers and student-teachers. This is to engage in a mutual professional learning about teaching practice. This would enable student-teachers to gain more insights into practicing teaching. This reflective discussion would also give teachers the possibility to reflect on themselves. To be able to build sustainable and long-term structures around reflective practice both the teachers and the student-teachers need to feel that they are learning and developing through mutual participation on an equal level.

The Linköping University and the Linköping Municipality implement jointly, within the context of the TePinTeach Project, a pilot project in which teachers and student-teachers collaborate on teaching within a PLC and engage in professional learning. This pilot project is conducted with two methods. The learning method for exploring the teaching situation is called Lesson Study. It is a method where a teaching team conducts a small study in which they focus on how they can best teach about a limited teaching content. The method is suitable because it (a) focuses on teaching and learning, (b) is based on actual needs in teaching practice, (c) enables development and learning for both teachers and student-teachers and (d) is based on collegial analyses and reflection. This collegial reflective analysis and reflections take place within the context of a PLC. The teachers and the student-teachers learn about their teaching, the effect on the pupils and how to learn from that to adjust their teaching.

An example on the systematic process of the method Lesson Study can be found in the diagram below:



Picture:

https://professionallyspeaking.oct.ca/march_2010/visuals/lesson_study_illustration.png

This pilot project is carried out with student-teachers who study in the education program for teaching for primary school and participate in a school internship.

2. Current professional learning opportunities for student-teachers and teachers

2.1. Students

In Sweden the Teacher Education program takes 3,5 year and the student-teachers have 15 weeks of training in schools during the course of the program. In the Linköping Municipality there are so called practice schools where the students attend their training. During this 15-week training, the students are expected to practice teaching and applying their theoretical knowledge. They also have to shadow their mentors and attend the cooperative groups of learning that their mentors attend on regular basis. However, the student-teachers in these groups tend to experience that they are not able to contribute at the same level as the teachers and they feel they are lacking the experience to participate on equal terms.

2.2. Teachers

PLC as a method, is not commonly used in Swedish schools; however, teachers participating in learning groups organized by the headmasters or themselves is common. The teachers commonly meet 1-2 hours per week in learning groups. The structure of learning groups are predetermined and there is a so called 'first teacher' leading the group. For the preparation for the activities in the learning group, articles, films, etc. are selected, read and used as initiating for the discussion. The topics for the sessions are based on the needs identified by the head of the school as challenges for the teachers and the organization. After the group meetings the teachers plan adjustments in their teaching for development and plan on tasks such observing each other's teaching.

The heads do not take part in the learning groups. However, they plan the topics and the input with the 'first teachers' (those who moderate the group). Thus, they feel part of the process and get a good insight in achievements.

When schools have student-teachers in internships, the student-teachers participate in these learning groups. They are expected to engage in the groups and be active in the reflective discussions.

3. Implementation of PLC through Lesson study

Student-teachers who study a particular course in the Teacher Education Program are offered to participate in a PLC of mentors and student-teachers. They work on the method of Lesson Studies. The project takes place partly during their training and partly before and after the training course.

The method of the Lesson Studies is carried out in two cycles with pre-test, analysis, lesson, post-test and analysis. The process starts with the learning group choosing a learning object, i.e., a limited teaching situation, which they want to focus and reflect on. Then a pre-test is carried out with the pupils, and then the session is run. After that, teachers and student-teachers analyse students' knowledge, plan teaching again to train the specific situation, and then examine whether their teaching has yielded results. This way PLC-like processes take place; lessons are developed, reviewed and analysed in a deep reflecting way. Each PLC is conducted in a group of 3 teachers and 3 student-teachers.

After the two cycles have been conducted, a focus-groups is ran with the student-teachers and the teachers to evaluate the results of the pilot.

3.1. Time chart of activities

Before the training:

week 1
Introductions on Lesson Study and PLC, also student-teachers and teachers work in a group and decide on what the teaching should focus on, 2 hours.
week 2
Teacher conducts pre-test of the knowledge of the subject chosen with group of pupils
week 3
Analysis of test and planning of lesson 1 in the work group, 1,5 hours.
week 4-5
Carrying out the lesson 1 and do post-test.

During work-based practice:

week 7
PLC 1, Analyse and discuss lesson 1 and adjust the lesson according to what emerges on students' tests and from the group discussion, 2 hours.
week 8
Carry out the adjusted lesson (Lesson 2), and carry out post-tests.
week 9
PLC 2, Discuss and analyse and summarize the results of the teaching and completed Lesson study. 1,5 hours

4. Results of the pilot

The pilot was carried out according to plan and the teachers and student-teachers shared the results of the Lesson Studies by sharing the pupils results before and after the Lesson Study and also shared recordings of the analyses and discussions. The student-teachers and the teachers also participated in a focus group to evaluate the PLC and their experiences of professional learning. The pilot purpose was to see if it is possible to engage student-teachers and teachers in professional learning on an equal basis. The first results are positive:

In the focus groups both the teachers and the student-teachers have experienced professional learning with PLC through the method of the Lesson Study. They reported that the structure of the two methods combined (principles of Lesson Study and reflective talk of a PLC) gave them the opportunity to experience professional learning and how to adjust their teaching in order to get higher results of pupils' knowledge. They also got the impression that the PLC discussions were conducted on an equal level for both the student-teachers and the teachers, and that the

PLC work was focused on a mutual experience. Both the student-teachers and teachers agree that the structure and methods in this pilot helps them to adjust and develop their teaching on an equal level.

Since the model, with its structure and methods, seems to have fulfilled the purpose and both the student-teachers and the teachers experienced professional learning, there will be a second larger pilot. In the second pilot there will be a mandatory part in a university course to do PLC through a Lesson Study. There will be no changes in the structure given in pilot 1, they are to follow the same structure and use the methods given. After the second pilot there will be focus groups to evaluate, same as in the first pilot.

Links for further readings:

English:

<https://tdtrust.org/what-is-lesson-study/>

<http://lessonstudy.co.uk/>

German:

https://besondersbegabte.alp.dillingen.de/images/Dokumente_red/Unterricht/Unterrichtsgestaltung/Schulentwicklung/Lesson_Study.pdf

<https://www.lernsichtbarmachen.ch/2014/11/lesson-study-eine-form-kooperativer-und-evidenzbasierter-unterrichtsreflexion/>

http://www.schule-bw.de/themen-und-impulse/oes/download/OES_Praxisbeispiel_Lesson-Study_2016-04-18.pdf